



Mass and Ministry COVID-19 Guidelines

Archdiocese of Oklahoma City

April 12, 2021

On March 17, 2020, Archbishop Coakley made the difficult decision to suspend public Masses and liturgies in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City in response to a rapidly expanding global pandemic. Since then, much has been learned about how to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and, as of March 29, 2021, all Oklahoma residents age 16 and older are eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

As we move into the second year of the COVID pandemic, the guidelines for Mass, receptions and parish gatherings are transitioning toward a more normal situation. Below are the latest updated guidelines, effective **Saturday, April 24, 2021**. Pastors have the option to implement the COVID guidelines prior to April 24 with the exception of lifting the dispensation for the Sunday Mass obligation. The Sunday Mass obligation will be restored in every parish of the archdiocese on April 24.

The updated guidelines are in bold. Archbishop Coakley asks all parishes to follow the guidelines to ensure the safety of parishioners and visitors while maintaining a welcoming environment. The archdiocese will continue to monitor COVID-19 and make adjustments as needed. Thank you for your patience.

Guiding Principles

- 1. Faith: As parishioners return to Mass, encourage catechesis and understanding of the Real Presence and foster an environment of discipleship and hospitality;**
2. Subsidiarity: In applying these guidelines pastors and their staffs are encouraged to adapt them to their unique circumstances and local conditions;
3. Charity: With a return of more people to Mass, reduced social distancing and out of concern for our vulnerable brothers and sisters, the mask requirement remains in place for the time being and everyone is encouraged to continue to use best hygiene practices.

Mass

- 1. The dispensation for attending Sunday Mass is lifted, effective Saturday, April 24, 2021. Those dispensed from the Sunday Mass obligation include:**
 - a: Those who are ill;**
 - b: Those who are caregivers for someone who is ill;**
 - c: The homebound;**
 - d: Anyone who is unable to receive a COVID vaccine at this time (e.g., women who are pregnant);**
 - e: Those who are vulnerable due to age, health or severe anxiety about becoming ill.**
- 2. With the exception of “d,” these dispensations were in place prior to the pandemic. For questions about dispensations to the obligation, contact your pastor.**

3. The provisional mask requirement remains in place for the time being;
4. **Mass capacity can be increased to 100 percent. Parishes are encouraged, however, to provide an area/section that is socially distanced for parishioners who may remain vulnerable;**
5. **Parishes that live-stream should consider removing or deleting the video of the Mass from Facebook, YouTube, etc., immediately following Mass to encourage in-person participation at Mass;**
6. **Extra sanitizing of church building and furnishings is no longer required;**
7. Hymnals can be returned to the pews;
8. **Choirs and congregational singing are allowed; consider limiting the size of the choir; masks should be worn even while singing;**
9. Holy water can be returned to fonts;
10. Nurseries are allowed; cry rooms are optional depending on space;
11. Please consider providing printed bulletins;
12. Please encourage parishioners to stay home if they are ill or have symptoms of COVID-19 or other illness;
13. **Offertory collections are allowed without restrictions; collection drop-off areas can remain;**
14. It is recommended that hand sanitizer be provided for parishioners in pews or at stations near entry points and exits.

Communion

1. Distribution of communion must be returned to the traditional placement during Mass;
2. Parishioners are encouraged to sanitize their hands before receiving communion.

In-Person Faith Formation and Other Ministries

1. Cloth face coverings must be worn by all participants age 6 and older except for:
 - a. Outdoor programs that involve separation of households or families;
 - b. The activity (e.g., eating or sports) makes mask wearing impossible.
2. Parishes are encouraged to provide an area/section that is socially distanced for participants who may remain vulnerable;
3. COVID-19 waivers must be obtained by all participants of in-person faith formation and other parish ministry. This is a sample [waiver](#).

Receptions and Social Gatherings

1. **Larger parish-wide social gatherings are permitted at full capacity; parishes are encouraged to provide an area/section that is socially distanced. Use of outdoor spaces is encouraged;**
2. **Receptions are allowed;**
3. Guests should be encouraged to eat and drink at tables;
 - a. Food service/distribution – should provide individual servings or have staff/catering employee/volunteer serve; please do not distribute self-serve buffet style or in common buckets/bowls/platters;
 - b. Cloth face coverings should be worn by all participants age 6 and older where feasible;
 - c. Parishes are encouraged to provide an area/section that is socially distanced for participants at parish-sponsored (as opposed to private) receptions for those who may remain vulnerable.

This document supersedes and replaces earlier documents and guidelines.